

Univerzita Karlova

Filozofická fakulta

Ústav anglického jazyka a didaktiky

Bakalářská práce

Eva Salačová

Swearing in English: Language Attitudes in L1 and L2 Speakers

Klení v angličtině: postoje vůči vulgarismům u mluvčích L1 a L2

Praha 2019

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Tomáš Gráf, Ph.D.

I would like to thank PhDr. Tomáš Gráf, PhD. for his support, expertise, and patience.

I would also like to thank Týna, Dája, Eva T., and Lucie for their help and invaluable advice.

And lastly, I would like to thank the administrative staff from both universities, and all the respondents themselves – this thesis would literally not be possible without them.

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the secondary literature that is listed in the list of references and sources. This thesis was not used as a part of any other university studies, nor was it used to gain a different university degree.

V Praze dne 4.8.2019

.....

Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Abstrakt

Výzkum jazykového tabu je stále tabu – a právě proto je to dodnes málo zkoumané téma. O klení ve druhém jazyce víme ještě méně. Cílem této práce je zjistit, zda rodilí a nerodilí mluvčí angličtiny vnímají klení v angličtině odlišně. Toto jsme vyzkoumali pomocí anonymního internetového dotazníku, který vyplnilo celkem 43 rodilých a 178 nerodilých mluvčích. Všichni byli studenti vysokých škol v Praze. Otázky se týkaly čtyř tematických okruhů: metadata; replikace předešlého výzkumu týkajícího se chování respondentů Dewaele (2017) a hodnocení míry tabu Beers Fägerstern (2007); dále obecné jazykové postoje respondentů; a nakonec názory respondentů na zahrnutí výuky klení do hodin angličtiny. Výsledky ukázaly, že rodilí i nerodilí mluvčí používají kletby v angličtině, a obě skupiny mají důvěru ve svou přesnost, i když nerodilí mluvčí méně. Dále byly ale objeveny veliké rozdíly v hodnocení míry tabu – nerodilí mluvčí měli od rodilých u 7 z 12 tabu slov odlišné hodnoty. Obě skupiny považovaly klení za přirozenou část jazyka, a přes 40% respondentů se přiklání k zahrnutí klení do výuky. Na základě výsledků jsme došly k závěru, že hodnocení obou skupin mohou pro nerodilé mluvčí mít nečekané následky, jelikož je mohou vést k chybnému používání klení v angličtině. Toto se může negativně odrážet v různých aspektech jejich života. Právě kvůli tomuto, a zároveň názorům našich respondentů, se tato práce přiklání k zahrnutí klení do výuky cizích jazyků.

klíčová slova: klení, jazykové tabu, jazykový postoj, první jazyk, druhý jazyk

Abstract

Researching language taboo is still considered taboo – as such, little research is done into topic. Even less is known about swearing in a second language. The goal of this thesis is to discover whether native and non-native speakers of English perceive swearing in English differently. This was done by the distribution of an anonymous online questionnaire, which was filled out by 43 native and 178 non-native speakers. These were all university students in Prague. The questions belonged into four thematic parts: metadata; replication of previous research concerning the self-reported behaviour of respondents Dewaele (2017) and offensiveness ratings Beers Fägersten (2007); furthermore general language attitudes; and finally respondents' opinions regarding the inclusion of swearing in curriculums for Foreign Language Teaching. Based on the results, we have come to the conclusion that the varying results of the two groups can have adverse consequences for non-native speakers, because they could lead to their misuse of swearing in English. This may reflect negatively in various parts of their lives. Because of this, and the support for this idea among the respondents themselves, the thesis argues for the inclusion of swearing in FLT.

key words: swearing, language taboo, language attitude, first language, second language

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	8
2	Definitions.....	9
2.1	Defining Cursing and Swearing.....	9
2.2	Other Key Concepts.....	10
2.3	What Is a Swear Word?.....	12
2.4	Defining Language Attitudes, L1, and L2.....	12
3	Theoretical Background.....	14
3.1	Language Attitudes.....	14
3.1.1	General Introduction.....	14
3.1.2	Ways of Studying.....	15
3.2	Literature Review.....	16
3.2.1	Dewaele (2017).....	17
3.2.2	Beers Fägersten (2007).....	18
3.2.3	Jay (1977).....	19
3.3	Foreign Language Teaching.....	20
3.3.1	Swearing in L2 speakers.....	20
3.3.2	Teaching Swearing to L2 Speakers.....	23
3.4	Research Questions.....	24
4	Methodology.....	25
5	Results and Analysis.....	29
5.1	Self-reported Swearing.....	29
5.2	Offensiveness Ratings.....	31
5.3	Comments on Individual Word Ratings.....	34
5.4	Responses Regarding the Inclusion of Swearing in FLT.....	36
5.5	Research Questions Examined.....	37
6	Conclusion.....	39
7	References.....	43
8	Resumé.....	45
9	Appendix.....	49

List of tables and figures

Table 1: Number and distribution of participants	26
Table 2: Age of participants	26
Table 3: Gender of participants	27
Table 4: Study programme of participants	27
Table 5: Self-reported fluency of L2 speakers' English	27
Table 6: Self-reported use of English among L1 speakers of English	28
Table 7: Self-reported use of English among L2 speakers of English	28
Table 8: L1 speakers' assessment of their frequency of swearing in English	30
Table 9: L2 speakers' assessment of their frequency of swearing in English	30
Table 10: Word offensiveness rating: L1 English speakers, on a scale of 1–10, 1 = not offensive, 10 = very offensive	32
Table 11: Word offensiveness rating: L2 English speakers, on a scale of 1–10, 1 = not offensive, 10 = very offensive	32
Table 12: Word offensiveness rating, L1 and L2 speakers, mean average and difference	32
Table 13: Word offensiveness ratings from Beers Fägersten (2007: 19–20), L1 and L2 speakers combined	33
Table 14: Table 14: Responses to Qs24+44, from L1 and L2 speakers	37
Figure 1: Responses to Qs 13+34, from L1 and L2 English speakers; 1 = never, 5 = all the time	29
Figure 2: Self-perceived accuracy when swearing in English, for L1 and L2 speakers of English; 1 = never, 5 = always	31
Figure 3: Responses to Qs 22+42, for L1 and L2 speakers of English; 1 = absolutely no, 5 = absolutely yes	37

1 Introduction

I have taught multiple children to swear. As an under-stimulated high-school student who spent 5 hours a week helping 11-year-olds memorize their English irregular verbs, I would always look forward to the final lesson of the school year. On that day, I could impart onto my student a lesson which may never be taught in a proper language classroom: we would talk about dirty words. Words which my students had heard, but had very little idea about the meaning of. Words which my students used, which may cause serious harm, words which may be considered hate speech. Bad words, powerful words. But just words. And over the course of our lesson, we would talk about these words, notably why we use them, and why we don't. You see, my point was never to teach children to swear as such – my point was to teach them to swear well. These sessions made me acutely aware of how much of a minefield this topic can be. It is from this central theme that the present work developed.

This thesis deals with swearing in English, specifically with the language attitudes speakers of English as their L1 and L2 have regarding swearing. The theoretical part consists of two chapters. Chapter Two introduces the definitions henceforth used in the thesis, such as swearing, cursing, language attitude, and L1 and L2. Chapter Three firstly provides a comprehensive overview of the literature available on the topic; secondly it lays forth relevant studies dealing with swearing of L1 and L2 speakers; lastly the chapter presents several studies which support the notion of making swearing a part of the curriculum in EFL/ESL classrooms.

The practical part consists of three chapters, all concerning the method chosen to evaluate the respondents' language attitudes: the questionnaire. Chapter Four delves into the topic of the methodology connected to the making of the questionnaire, as well as its dissemination, and the language situation under which it is administered to the respondents – this group being university students living in Prague. In Chapter Five, the data collected by administering the questionnaire is presented in detail. Chapter Six then provides analysis of said data, and compares it to the results of previous studies presented in Chapter Three, when applicable.

2 Definitions

As the following thesis deals with the phenomenon of swearing, the following pages deal with this topic in literature, starting with the definition of swearing and related key concepts.

2.1 Defining Cursing and Swearing

The first, and arguably the biggest, issue with studying what Jay (1992: 7) has cleverly named “dirty words” is giving them a name. A simple approach of calling a spade a spade may be applied here, but virtually every name carries a certain connotation, making none of the definitions ideal, as all are unfortunately liable to misinterpretation. Perhaps to avoid further confusion, it needs to be mentioned here that this work deals with synchronic linguistics, and while the historic aspects of each definition are briefly stated, they were not the main deciding factor in which term to use. Both primary ways of referring to the phenomenon studied bear strong religious ties.

Cursing - a term is widely used in America (see Jay 1992: 1) – is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (2019: “curse, n.”) as “an utterance consigning, or supposed or intended to consign, (a person or thing) to spiritual and temporal evil, the vengeance of the deity, the blasting of malignant fate, etc.” Mohr (2013: 10) states that in its most basic form, cursing “invokes a deity to make something bad happen to someone,” and this is done by using words which are of religious or nowadays of societal value. Furthermore, the speaker’s intent is harm, and he or she is aware of this, as is the listener (Jay 1992: 2–3).

On the other hand, the OED (2019: “swear, v.”) defines **swearing** as the act of making “a solemn declaration or statement with an appeal to God or a superhuman being, or to some sacred object, in confirmation of what is said.” Historically, swearing comes from the act of swearing an oath: in the language taboo sense, an oath means “words or / phrases to take God’s name in vain, mention his body parts, or otherwise detract from his honour” (Mohr 2013: 7–8). In the contemporary setting, however, the term swearing encompasses “both oaths and obscenities¹” (*ibid.*, 12). The term ‘swearing’ is the one used in this thesis.

When choosing the appropriate word to describe the phenomenon, a thorough examination of the terminology used in other academic works was taken into account.

¹ For further explanation of this term, please read below.

Of the literature for this thesis, one book, Jay (1992), uses ‘cursing’, and another does not (Mohr 2013). Of the four articles² used here, Horan (2013) uses both as distinct but related phenomena, while the commonly-used reference Vingerhoets et al. (2013) article features them both as synonyms; the remaining two opted for ‘swearing.’ Of the six studies³ used here, five make use of the word ‘swearing.’ This thesis follows suit.

As has been mentioned, ‘cursing’ is also primarily associated with American English. This is the last reason why the term ‘swearing’ is used, given the fact that this thesis explores the multilingual situation in Prague, and was written at a decidedly European institution. These are the reasons behind the term chosen to name the phenomenon, and the word ‘swearing’ will be used exclusively from now on,⁴ in the interest of using unified terminology. Now that the main term has been defined and explained in full, we can examine some more concepts associated with this topic.

2.2 Other Key Concepts

Swearing belongs within the category of *language taboo*. The severity of this taboo has begun to weaken in recent years, and this has opened the possibility of studying the phenomenon academically (Mohr 2013: 7). Taboo in general concerns the inhibition or suppression “of certain behavior, thoughts, [...] or speech” (Jay 1992: 4). In terms of language, this may refer to the things we talk about, how or whether we talk about them, and who talks about them – a good example of language taboo is parents policing their children’s language (Jay 1992: 4). The words shrouded in taboo can function as good indicators of “at least part of the system of values and beliefs of the society in question” (Trudgill 2000: 18), and should a speaker fail to adhere to these norms, it may lead to “punishment or public shame” (*ibid.*).

It is paramount to mention that taboo is idiosyncratic to each culture and community: within the English-speaking world, language taboo focuses on “bodily parts actions and excretions/ that culture demands we conceal, whether by covering with clothing, shrouding in privacy, or flushing down the toilet” according to Mohr (2013: 6–7),

2 These articles are: Finn (2017) and Mercury (1995). The two other articles used in this thesis are the aforementioned Horan (2013) and Vingerhoets et al. (2013), whose use of terminology is discussed above. For further detail about the sources, see Chapter Seven.

³ These studies are: Beers Fägersten (2007), Cohen (2016), Dewalea (2004) and (2017), Gawinkowska et al. (2013), and Liyanage et al. (2015). For further detail, see Chapter Seven.

⁴ If the research quoted utilizes different terminology, it will be adjusted to fit in with the terms used in this thesis. Whenever this occurs, a footnote will always state the original term used.

and Trudgill professes these to be “words connected to sex, [...] excretion and the Christian religion” (Trudgill 2000: 19). While many communities share these particular taboos, virtually all cultures have a taboo attitude regarding “concepts associated with death or dying” (Jay 1992: 5). This is an excellent example of language taboo, but not of swearing – swearing itself is a particular kind of language taboo, as further examined in this thesis. To put it in simple terms, while not all language taboo is swearing, all swearing is language taboo. This thesis only examines swearing, which has been associated with various other names.

A subdivision of taboo, **obscenity** works as “a legal concept” (Mohr 2012: 239) and is determined by each country’s courts and laws (Jay 1992: 6). Obscene language is a part of this concept, as are obscene acts or practices. Obscene language cannot be used in public media, and is subject to various restrictions (*ibid.*, 5). The taboo surrounding **profanity** is “based on a religious distinction” (*ibid.*, 3) as opposed to a legal one. Profane functions as the opposite of the Holy (Mohr 2013: 10), and either ignores or does not tolerate the norms laid forward by a religion (Jay 1992: 3).

Other terms used to refer to taboo language include, but are not limited to: blasphemy, vulgarity, and bad language, and its specific examples of slurs, insults and epithets. For our purposes, **slurs** are “verbal attacks on people, [which] [...] gain their power by denoting real or imagined characteristics of the target” (*ibid.*: 8). They tend to target oppressed groups, and are uttered with the intent to hurt their recipient. The next section will deal with the three other ways of referring to the studied phenomenon.

The term **blasphemy** signifies the breakage of a religious taboo. The intention of the speaker is what sets it apart from profanity: blasphemy directly attacks “a religion or a religious doctrine” (Jay 1992: 3) and the speaker is aware of this. In recent years however, as the power of religious organizations is diminishing, blasphemy has largely lost its power (*ibid.*, 4).

The term **vulgarity** is used to refer to taboo language in a certain way: it carries “a class distinction” (Mohr 2013: 12), an evaluation on the speaker, because this is how the uneducated, common people speak (Jay 1992: 6). This naming itself carries a judgement “on the proletariat by the upper classes,” (*ibid.*, 6) and as such it cannot be universally used. **Bad language** is the same case, as the term itself is used to assess the behaviour it is supposedly giving name to.

2.3 What Is a Swear Word?

After all this research, a simple question still hangs in the air: what is a swearword? The answer to this may appear equally simple and baffling. The definition we will henceforth work with stems from the previously mentioned terminology examination, but it also is aware that not all lay speakers and non-expert academics will share this background information. For these reasons, a more “snappy” definition will be used.

The definition given in the questionnaire is:

Swearwords are words generally associated with taboo. They are “bad” words: vulgar, obscene, profane, or dirty; words such as: *shit*, *fuck*, *tits*, *cunt*, etc... Words you would feel strange saying in front of your grandmother, a child, or if they were said to you. Sometimes referred to as curse words.

2.4 Defining Language Attitudes, L1, and L2

Language attitude is an elusive term, and one which is notoriously difficult to define (Maio & Haddock 2012: 4) (Garrett 2011: 19). The definition this thesis works with is: a “psychological construct” (*ibid.*, 20) which encompasses one’s “likes and dislikes” (Maio & Haddock 2012: 4) regarding a certain phenomenon. Language attitudes cannot be observed directly (Garrett 2011: 20), and are “learned, rather than [...] innate” (Garrett 2011: 22). The acquisition may come from “our personal experiences and our social environment, including the media” (*ibid.*), and can change over time. The language attitudes examined here will pertain to English spoken as L1 and L2.

A speaker’s *first language* (or L1) is defined, broadly speaking, as “a person’s mother tongue or the language acquired first” (Richards & Schmidt 2010: 221). In an English-speaking context, a person who has English as their L1 may be a speaker born and raised in England, in a monolingual, English-speaking household. They may take French lessons once they approach school age, but grew up speaking English as their first language. A person can also have two L1s, if they grew up speaking both since childhood, and have retained fluency in both languages into adulthood: an example of this would be a child raised part-time in England and France, with a French-speaking mother and an English-speaking father,

who not only achieved fluency in the said languages as a child, but has also retained it. Someone's L1 may also be referred to as their *native language*.⁵

In opposition to this, someone's *second language* (or L2) is "any language learned after one has learned one's native language" (*ibid.*, 514). Examples of this would be our English-speaking monolingual who learns French in school – this is their L2. Within the context of Prague, Czech students who are learning English, French or German, are also acquiring those as their L2s. As with L1, the term L2 can actually refer to multiple languages – so a Czech child will typically have English as their first L2, and then German or French as their second L2. This thesis will examine the language attitudes of L1 and L2 speakers regarding the phenomenon of swearing.

⁵ This thesis will make exclusive use of the term 'first language' (L1).

3 Theoretical Background

The following is the background research relevant to the present research topic. Firstly, we elaborate on language attitudes, how they are talked about and how they are researched. Secondly, the studies specifically duplicated in this thesis are introduced. And thirdly, we delve into the topic of L2 swearing, and its consequences.

3.1 Language Attitudes

As has been stated previously, language attitudes are extremely challenging to define – a feat which this thesis attempted in the previous chapter. The following section talks about attitudes, then sums up basic ways of describing them, and finally elaborates on the methods of their study.

3.1.1 General Introduction

Attitudes are “psychological constructs” (Garrett 2011: 20) and therefore “cannot be touched” (Chromý 2014: 51). As such, specific techniques have been developed in the field of psychology, so that we are able to talk about and research this kind of phenomenon. Attitudes are seen as “vital in understanding human thought and behavior” (Maio & Haddock 2012: 4) and do in fact influence the way we think, act, and view the world around us (*ibid.*).

We learn these attitudes (Garrett 2011: 22) throughout our life, from our surroundings; whether it is our family, our environment, our culture, and the media we consume (*ibid.*). Our attitudes can also change over time, with the biggest influence being other people. One’s reported attitude may also be subject to what Garret (2011: 44) calls “social desirability bias” and defines as “the tendency for people to give answers to questions in ways they believe to be ‘socially appropriate’” (*ibid.*) – even if their personal attitudes differ from what they reported, in order to signal group membership.

This thesis examines one specific field of attitudes, and this subdiscipline is language attitudes. Simply put, these would be attitudes individuals harbour towards language, its different facets and aspects of usage. According to Garret (2011: 2), “people hold attitudes to language at all of its levels,” and this thesis further examines the field of language taboo. Perhaps unsurprisingly, people’s views on language do influence multiple parts of their communication: the way we react to other language users, our awareness of how we may be perceived as we use language, and the subsequent influence of this on the communicative

tools we choose (*ibid.*). Words have power because of the language attitude connotations which come with them – and by correctly assessing the situation, one can sink or swim in any communicative situation.

There are various aspects of attitudes which can be observed and measured. Two of these are valence and strength (Maio & Haddock 2012: 4). Attitude valence can be “positive, negative, or neutral” (*ibid.*). While one person may dislike horses, the other may have no feelings towards them one way or the other. Attitude strength is self-explanatory, for example someone may feel very passionately about the local football team, while his neighbour may only hold a lukewarm affirmation for the same team. It is important to note that attitudes greater in strength “are more persistent,” easier to recall, and less likely to change over time (*ibid.*, 42).

The relationship between attitudes and behaviour is not as straightforward as it may seem. The act of attitudes influencing one’s actions actually “depends on a number of variables” (*ibid.*, 24), for example: “domain of behavior, [...] strength of attitude, [...] the person, [...] the situation (*ibid.*, 24). While they are definitely “related” (Eiser 2011: 14), we cannot simply assume that attitudes would be the only thing influencing behaviour, largely because each facet of human interaction as well as behaviour is in fact incredibly complex.

3.1.2 Ways of Studying

There are many ways to study attitudes. Any aspect of doing so “involves the expression of an *evaluative judgement* about” (Maio & Haddock 2012: 4) a phenomenon, in our case swearing. An attitude is retrieved from the respondent’s memory, “provided they had previously formed one and stored it in memory” (Gohner & Wanke 2002: 23). For example, if we ask a person how offensive they find a word which they had previously heard in the form of an insult directed at them, their response should be negative. Conversely, if a person has never encountered a word, taboo or not, their attitude towards it will likely be neutral.

There are two ways of dividing attitude research. The approach is either “explicit (direct)” or “implicit (indirect)” (Maio & Haddock 2012: 11). The easiest way of assessing an attitude “is to simply ask” (Gohner & Wanke 2002: 19), which would be the explicit method. As Garrett (2011: 39) explains:

people are simply asked questions directly about language evaluation, preferences, etc. They are invited to articulate explicitly what their attitudes are to various language

phenomena. So it is an approach that relies upon overt elicitation of attitudes.

It is also important to note that this way, the process requires “conscious attention” (Maio & Haddock 2012: 11) as it asks the test subjects to directly rate where they stand and how they feel. One way of directly assessing attitudes is through “self-reported questionnaires in which participants respond to direct questions about their opinions” (*ibid.*, 11). This is the most commonly used research method (Gohner & Wanke 2002: 39).

One way of accessing the level of an attitude is through the Likert scale. This is “an attitude rating scale” (Garrett 2011: 21) and examines “whether we mildly disapprove of something or we well and truly detest it” (*ibid.*, 23). It is named after Rensis Likert, “significant researcher” in the field of psychological attitudes (Maio & Haddock 2012: 5), and remains one of the “most widely used multi-item attitude scales” (Gohner & Wanke 2002: 27) used in this line of research.

Put simply, a Likert scale is a “bipolar scale” on which the participants are asked to rate a phenomenon “from negative to positive” (*ibid.*, 52). This is the value which then indicates their attitude. Each value is given a number (Maio & Haddock 2012: 12) and a general description of each end is given, so the respondents can indicate not only the ‘direction’ of their attitude but also its intensity. The exact number of numbers used in the scale may differ, with the most frequent ones being 1–5 or 1–10.

Much of the previous research into language attitudes has been conducted in a laboratory. According to Jay (1992: 119), “from the period of 1970 to 1980 most word research was conducted in a college psychology laboratory using college students in a variety of paper and pencil tasks involving dirty words.” To this day, a lot of research into swearing and taboo language in general is conducted in laboratories, and a part of this thesis emulates a laboratory study. Today, both laboratory and non-laboratory (e.g. internet-distributed questionnaires, interviews, etc.) studies are conducted.

3.2 Literature Review

The following is an account of the studies which serve as the basis of the practical part of this thesis. For each of the three studies, we will examine: the object of the study, the method and sample, its limitations, and briefly mention its results. The relevant results of said studies appear in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

3.2.1 Dewaele (2017)

The first study used, “Self-reported frequency of swearing in English: do situational, psychological and sociobiographical variables have similar effects on first and foreign language users?,” was written by Jean-Marc Dewaele, and published in 2017 in *The Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. Its aim is to “compare the strengths of the relationships of a number of known variables on L1 and [L2]⁶ users’ self-reported frequency of swearing in English” (Dewaele 2017: 331). These variables are, in short: the interlocutor effect; Psychotism, Extraversion and Neuroticism; and sociobiographical comparison. The study does so by firstly defining its four research questions, two of which are relevant to us:

- 1) Is there a difference in the amount of self-reported frequency of swearing in English between L1 and [L2] users of English?
- 2) Is the effect of interlocutor on self-reported frequency of swearing in English similar for L1 or [L2] users of English?

(*ibid.*, 334)

The method chosen to assess the research questions was a questionnaire.

The material is collected through “an open-access anonymous online questionnaire.” It had not only been advertised online and up for 5 months, but also sent through emails to teachers, students and institutions, and made use of the referral method. A total of 2324 participants finished the survey, and the sample actually consists of approximately even numbers of native and non-native speakers of English. The questionnaire itself consisted of several parts: the participants were asked to fill out a brief autobiographical overview of their life and history, they also filled out “the short version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire” (which measures the psychological dimensions), and finally completed the self-reported section of their swearing in English.⁷ The participants varied in nationality, age, first and second languages, and geographical location. It is important to note that they were mostly well-educated, and that almost 70% of all respondents were women. Lastly, all respondents rated their proficiency in English as “high,” although the L2 speakers clearly rated theirs lower than L1 speakers had. All L2 speakers had also reported lower use of English overall compared to their L1 counterparts, but most had spent more than 3 months living in a majority English-speaking country.

⁶ Please note that the original text uses the term ‘LX’ the same way this thesis uses the term ‘L2.’ The term L2 will henceforth be used even when discussing this study.

⁷ This question is replicated in this thesis as Q11 and Q32, see Appendix.

When it comes to the study's limitations, the author points out that self-reported behaviour is not the same as actual behaviour. Furthermore, the respondents' replies may not necessarily be very representative of their actual behaviour or views, due to the desirability status when it comes to taboo. And lastly, as the majority of the respondents were highly educated and female, the findings cannot reflect the entire population.

Furthermore, there are two more issues relevant to this thesis which need to be examined: defining Ls, and the actual usage of English among L1 and L2 speakers. When it comes to the definitions, this may simply be accounted for by the fact that many researchers go with the common-knowledge option, in order to avoid an overly-long questionnaire; the majority of the respondents, after all, were educated females, likely in Humanities. That being said, the much bigger issue arises when it comes to L2 speakers and the domains in which they use English. For example, if an Italian lecturer moved to the US, but has an Italian partner and they speak Italian to their children, this speaker's use of English to her family is presumably going to be very low, if not non-existent. It is therefore evident she is very unlikely to swear in English when speaking to any family member. The tie between one's first language and their family is particularly strong, but also applies to the other interlocutor situations in the questionnaire. This was by far the biggest limitation of this study, and one it did not take into account. The study's strengths, on the other hand, lie in its large sample size, statistically robust results, as well as its holistic overview of many factors surrounding the topic of swearing and L1/L2.

3.2.2 Beers Fägersten (2007)

The second study is entitled "A sociolinguistic analysis of swear word offensiveness," and was written by Kristen Beers Fägersten and published in 2007 in the *Saarland Working Papers*. This study assessed swear word offensiveness in a social setting, and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. It was administered through a questionnaire and a follow-up interview. The questionnaire was 6 pages long, and consisted of autobiographical and socioeconomical information, as well as two word-rating tasks, and follow-up questions to these tasks (Beers Fägersten 2007: 16–17). The first word-rating task had been adapted from Jay (1977).⁸ During the interview, the selected subjects were asked to elaborate on their choices in the questionnaire.

⁸ This task is replicated in this thesis, see Appendix.

The questionnaire and the subsequent interviews were both administered among undergraduates in a laboratory at the University of Florida in the USA. Notably, the subjects did not know what the questionnaire was going to be about, and were given an option to leave once the term offensiveness became known. The sample consisted of 60 relevant respondents, approximately half of whom were male and half female, and represented the student university population in terms of race, too. No L1/L2 distinctions were made during the collection or analysis of data.

In her analysis and commentary, Beers Fägersten warns against the use of word lists when assessing their taboo levels, as she shows in the results of her follow up interviews: the participants stressed context as the main reason of why and how they chose a certain number to assess a word's offensiveness, and why they were torn between several options. Beers Fägersten further stresses the importance of cultural, individual and community differences, and then elaborates on the varying results among various subcategories, such as men-women, and people of various ethnic backgrounds. The complete results of the offensiveness rating, the part most relevant to us, can be found in Chapter 5.

The main limitations of this study are its smaller sample, and minimal mention of the L1/L2 distinction. The latter is only touched upon in the discussion, where it provides a possible interpretation of the data provided by Hispanics and their rating of offensiveness (*ibid.*, 32). As has been mentioned previously, the laboratory university-sanctioned environments in which the students filled out the questionnaire may have had negative effects on their responses, due to the desirability bias. That being said, the studies strengths rely on the study's razor focus on its specific topic, and a well-developed questionnaire. The study defined its goal clearly, found a relevant topic missing in research, and created data comparable to previous results.

3.2.3 Jay (1977)

Timothy Jay's study serves as a side note, rather than a serious source of comparison. Conducted in 1972-1974, the results of this study appeared in a 1977 article as an example of how to study taboo language. The study's main goal was to assess taboo word usage and their perceived 'obscenity'⁹ among college students. The students were given a list of 60 words –

⁹ Even though this word was used, its strong correlation to the word 'offensive' used in Beers Fägersten (2007) makes it possible to compare the results. The subjects certainly would not have been aware of this minor distinction.

28 taboo,¹⁰ 28 non-taboo, and 4 “anchors” – and were asked to rate them: first on how often they thought these words would be used among regular college students, and secondly on how much they thought the words would be found obscene by most people. The assessment took place on a 1–9 scale.

The study was conducted at the University of Kent (USA) campus, in a laboratory setting. It was administered to 52 students who were all enrolled in a psychology class, and approximately 55% of the respondents were female. No other data was collected regarding their sociographical background. For this particular study, the limitations are manifold: its small sample size, its surprising results, and its use of a laboratory setting when specifically dealing with taboo words. Also, as the research is now more than 40 years old, and makes no mention of any L1/L2 background of participants, the results may now be a little outdated, but nevertheless provide a valuable set of data. The results were a list of various ratings, presented in Chapter Five.

3.3 Foreign Language Teaching

The following section of this thesis delves into the topic of foreign language teaching and swearing. Specifically, we are going to examine the under-researched field of L2 swearing, and how its reality may be transferred into a classroom setting.

3.3.1 Swearing in L2 speakers

One particular aspect of swearing in English falls to its non-native speakers. Namely, it has been suggested, not only by the results of Dewaele (2017), but also by Dewaele (2004) and Gawinkowska et al. (2013), that L2 speakers of any language perceive taboo words with less emotion than the language’s L1 speakers. We will now examine two of these studies in greater detail.

Gawinkowska et al. (2013) conducted research among 61 university students in a classroom setting: the respondents “were treated as Polish-English bilinguals” (*ibid.*, 3) and were given a collection of translation exercises which contained taboo expressions. The tasks had been designed to assess the students’ perception of taboo words, and also their English proficiency, and the translation took place both ways, e.g. from L1 to L2, and vice versa. Interestingly, the students were later given rating scales to measure the offensiveness of the taboo words in the original and their translation, so they themselves provided “the comparison

¹⁰ A sample of these words appeared in Beers Fägersten (2007) and was adapted in this thesis. See Appendix.

of the level of offensiveness between the source and the target words” (*ibid.*). Gawinkowska et al. argue that this provides more objective data.

The results of the study were surprising: When translating slurs, respondents actually used more offensive words than the original when translating into their L1, and conversely used less offensive language when translating from their L1 into their L2. On the other hand, when translating any other swear words, the respondents’ translations made use of less offensive vocabulary when translating from their L2 to their L1, and used more ‘expressive’ language in translations from their L1 to L2 (e.g. Polish to English). It is important to note that had the L1/L2 distinction not been an issue, the words used in translation would have been rated as more or less equally ‘offensive’ in the subsequent rating tasks.

Dewaele (2004) investigated the emotional force behind swear words in multilinguals through an online questionnaire. The study had 1,039 participants, mostly female, and English was the most commonly reported L1. The questionnaire, besides gathering sociographical data, asked a simple question to all participants: “Do swear and taboo words in your different languages have the same emotional weight for you?” (*ibid.*, 211) The respondents could answer this question for up to 5 of their languages. The results overwhelmingly concluded that swear words “in the L1 are perceived to have much more emotional force” compared to words in L2s (*ibid.*, 212), and the qualitative data collected further elaborated this point. The author also states that the L1 words’ emotional aspect could potentially limit a speaker’s use of them.

Alongside the results of these two aforementioned studies, there is a great wealth of anecdotal evidence to support their claim, both from and outside of the classroom. This idea is also further supported by many research articles dealing with teaching swearing (see e.g. Finn 2017: 24; Mercury 1995: 28). Once we have established that learners report a difference between using swear words in their L1 and L2(s), the next logical step would be to examine the consequences of this. This problem cannot be ignored, due to the fact that learners will inarguably come into contact with taboo language (Finn 2017: 18–19; Mercury 1995: 35) – in books, on TV or the radio, or in day-to-day conversation – and their lack of knowledge would leave them “vulnerable” (Liyanage et al. 2015: 123) and exposed to misunderstanding, miscommunication, and even ridicule.

The three major areas in which L2 learners may struggle and make mistakes in would be: frequency, context, and cultural and linguistic differences. Firstly, learners may form a

“distorted image” (Mercury 1995: 35) of swearing, as swearwords do indeed frequently feature in popular media, but mostly without the much necessary context; this may lead learners to the conclusion that “swearing is appropriate in any social situation” (Finn 2017: 20) or to misjudge the severity of the taboo words used (*ibid.*, 20). Secondly, context is key when it comes to swearing, as successful swearers are aware of “social restrictions” (Mercury 1995: 33) in any particular situation, and adjust accordingly. In other words, offensiveness is determined by the speaker, the addressee and his / her reaction, their relationship, as well as the environment they find themselves in (Horan 2013: 294). Anyone not aware of this would not take the context into account, leading them to use language taboo indiscriminately (Mercury 1995: 33).

Lastly, the speaker’s culture must be taken into account. While one culture, and therefore the speakers of the language, may find one phenomenon extremely offensive, another culture may not necessarily share these views – and even if two cultures agree on one area being taboo, the severity of offensiveness may differ. Such areas could be “religion, disease, scatology, parts of the body and sex than others” (Horan 2013: 295). Furthermore, a learner’s interpretation of what is taboo in their L2 is influenced by their L1, and their L1’s use of taboo language (Cohen 2016: 563): for example, if one’s L1 and culture is particularly non-religious, such as it is generally in the Czech Republic, they may not consider an exclamation such as ‘Oh my God!’ as taboo. But when speaking with a devout Southern Baptist in their native language, a Czech person could find themselves being confronted about their inappropriate use of language by their interlocutor. The three major areas of error for L2 learners in their L2 language are frequency, context and culture. There is one more area connected to their use of L2 in their L1.

When dealing with English in particular, the language’s world-wide usage as lingua franca has resulted in its taboo words being borrowed into other languages by their native speakers (Horan 2013: 290). The reasons for this could certainly be discussed at length, but for now we will only mention that many speakers may not be aware of the severity of the language taboo of the borrowed words, or even if they were, they do not feel the same level of emotional involvement to it as a native speaker would.

3.3.2 Teaching Swearing to L2 Speakers

Despite all the reasons mentioned above, it is still “rare for teachers to introduce taboo language as an object of language learning” (Liyanage et al. 2015: 114). Without any explicit instruction on the manner and complexity of swearing, learners are left on their own, creating a socially challenging environment for the L2 speakers (*ibid.*; Finn 2017: 18). Many experts believe learners would benefit from having lessons on the proper use of swearwords. If learners are not taught about taboo language, Liyanage et al. (2015: 113) argues, teaching “misses an opportunity” to impart a valuable lesson on language. Horan (2013: 291) also calls for “contextualized discussion of appropriateness and register,” and Mercury (1995) devotes her entire article to it.

The reasons for the inclusion of language taboo in the curriculum are simple: to offset the above mentioned disadvantages of L2 swearing, and enable learners to access the “possible benefits” (Finn 2017: 18) of swearing ‘properly’. This may be so that they can fit in with their L1 speaker friends or colleagues, interpret social situations correctly, and fully express themselves in personality and intense emotions in their L2 (Horan 2013: 284). Mercury (1995: 29) points out that it would be especially “pedagogically useful” to explain the variety in social context and appropriateness, while Finn (2017: 24) suggests teachers pay special attention to “the level of offensiveness of words” with the assistance of a Likert scale (*ibid.*). Notably, many articles dealing with this topic highlight the need for more research to be done in this field, and the lack of appropriate materials for teaching taboo (Mercury 1995: 32; Horan 2013: 293). Now that we have covered the issue of including taboo language in L2 classrooms, and its rarity and importance, we will delve into what is actually happening in classrooms.

Cohen (2016) conducted a survey among native and non-native language teachers which focused on their teaching of pragmatics. This included swearing.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, the reported values for teaching swearing were low, as neither the native nor non-native teachers devoted much time or energy to it specifically. However, the non-native teachers did report covering it more, and did teach learners “how to interpret and deliver [swears] more than [native speakers]” (*ibid.*, 569) had. This may perhaps be interpreted as the teachers taking their own language learning journey into account, and being more aware of the problems surrounding this particular topic. That being said, both groups of teachers “expressed a desire

¹¹ Cohen (2016) uses ‘cursing’ the same way this thesis uses ‘swearing.’

to have greater access to pragmatics information and research findings” (*ibid.*, 580), due to the insufficient teaching materials currently available. Cohen himself identifies swearing as a “huge part of living in a culture” (*ibid.*) which is often omitted from teaching altogether, and may serve as a motivator to draw students in.

Liyanage et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative research project which consisted of three hour-long interviews with three experienced TESOL teachers. The interviews focused on teaching about language taboo in general, as well as on one particular lexical item: the use of ‘bloody’ in Australian English. Much of what was written in this study has been said previously in this chapter, but perhaps the most telling thing of all is the fact that while all three participants agreed that little attention is paid by teachers to this topic, all three had very different opinions on how or whether it should be taught at all. A further point made by Liyanage et al. in connection to adding swearing to the curriculum is also the simple fact “that classroom introduction of taboo language is [...] taboo” (*ibid.*, 119), and as such breaks the very rules it wants to talk about breaking. The implications of this are manifold.

3.4 Research Questions

The following research questions (RQs) stem from the previously mentioned literature. They cover language attitudes, the L1/L2 distinction in swearing in English, and teaching taboo in ESL classrooms. The first two RQs are adapted from the studies used directly in the methodological part of the thesis, i.e. Dewaele (2017) and Beers Fägersten (2007). All RQs are reflected in the questionnaire which is described in Chapter Four and can be found in Appendix. The questionnaire itself solicited more data than is analysed in the thesis.

- (1) Do L1 and L2 speakers of English differ in their self-reported uses of swearing in English?
- (2) Do L1 and L2 speakers of English differ in their ratings of offensiveness in English?
- (3) How do these findings compare to those in existing research?
- (4) Do L1 and L2 speakers of English differ in their attitudes towards teaching swearing to ESL learners?

4 Methodology

The questionnaire was anonymous. After first conducting a pilot study with some valuable feedback from 5 initial test subjects, the current questionnaire was developed. Although L1 and L2 speakers were divided into two separate groups, they answered virtually the same questions, only adjusted for their perspective on English.¹² The L2 speakers' part was questions¹³ 8–28, the L1 speakers' questions were 29–48. The questionnaire consists of four general thematic parts: the first part was designed to elicit the participants' metadata (Qs 1–7); the second part replicated Dewaele (2017) and Beers Fägersten (2007) (Qs 8–9 for L2, and Qs 29–33 for L1); the third part was designed to examine general language attitudes towards swearing in English (Qs 13–21 for L2, and Qs 34–41 for L1); and the fourth aimed to elicit the respondent's views and experiences with swearing and Foreign Language Teaching (Qs 22–28 for L2, and Qs 42–48 for L1).

The questionnaire was distributed online through social media: both privately sent to friends with a request to pass it along, as well as posted in groups, most significantly in four dorm groups. This was all done by sharing the link to the google form, titled “Swearing in English.” The text accompanying the social media posts specifically asked for university students, and advertised the duration of the questionnaire as ‘taking approximately 7 minutes.’ The data was collected over a period of five weeks in March and April of 2019. We believe the attractiveness of the topic contributed to the large number of responses.

The target group chosen for the study was formed by university students in Prague. There were two main reasons for choosing this particular group: firstly, the author has an easy access to large groups of university students, as she herself is a member of this group; and secondly, many similar studies have been conducted on the undergraduate population, which offers an opportunity for more apt comparison. The two specific language communities in which the questionnaire was distributed were two esteemed institutions situated in Prague. Both will remain anonymous. The first is a Czech public university, with the majority of its students being L1 speakers of Czech or Slovak. Although the questionnaire was distributed among members of numerous faculties of this university, most of the respondents are presumably from the Faculty of Arts, where the student body is overwhelmingly female. The

¹² It should be noted that in the electronic version of the questionnaire, the questions did not have numbers. In the thesis version of the questionnaire provided in Appendix, each question is assigned a number in the interest of clarity.

¹³ Hereafter referred to as “Q(s)”.

second institution is the Prague-situated branch of a private American university with a large number of international students. It is also important to mention that during this particular semester, over half of the students identified as female.

The total number of participants was 243, 221 of whom were relevant to this study (the relevancy was determined by their answer to Q1: “Are you a university student in Prague?”). This makes for a 90.9% success rate at targeting the chosen group. L1 English speakers made approximately 19.5% of the relevant participants, and L2 English speakers approximately 80.5%. Only two respondents identified as bilinguals, and neither of them had English as one of their L1s.¹⁴ Table 1 shows the complete numbers.

Total number of respondents	Relevant number of respondents	L1 speakers of English	L2 speakers of English
243	221	43	178

Table 1: Number and distribution of participants

The vast majority of the respondents were in the 19–24 age group, which is consistent with the expected age of college students both in the Czech Republic and the US. In terms of age, the group was therefore very homogeneous (for further details, see Table 2.) Notably, very few speakers from the “30–40”, “40–50”, and “over 50”¹⁵ categories responded to the survey – this may be accounted for by the fact that not many people of this age attend university, as well as the fact that social media had been chosen as the sole distribution method of the questionnaire.

	18 and under	19–24	25–30	30–40	40–50	Over 50
all respondents	0.5%	90.0%	7.2%	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%
L1 speakers	2.3%	88.4%	4.7%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%
L2 speakers	0.0%	90.4%	7.9%	0.6%	1.1%	0.0%

Table 2: Age of participants

As for gender, over two thirds of respondents identified as female (Table 3). This is also consistent with the results of similar studies conducted, in which women were seen as more likely to participate. All relevant respondents answered this question. The participants’ study programmes were also recorded and can be seen in Table 4. The vast majority was enrolled in a Bachelor’s/Undergraduate programme, which again corresponds to the questionnaire’s distribution circles.

¹⁴ The two bilinguals reported Czech-Dutch and Czech-French as their L1s, respectively.

¹⁵ The age categories were inarguably badly chosen, an oversight which was not discovered until the questionnaire had already gone out. That being said, as the vast majority belonged in the 19-24 category, we believe that this discrepancy will not have significant effect on our results.

	Female	Male	Other
all respondents	68.3%	29.4%	2.3%
L1 speakers	65.1%	34.9%	0.0%
L2 speakers	69.1%	28.1%	2.8%

Table 3: Gender of participants

	Bachelor's/ Undergraduate	Master's	PhD.	Other
all respondents	76.9%	20.4%	1/3%	0.9%
L1 speakers	90.7%	9.3%	0.0%	0.0%
L2 speakers	74.2%	23.0%	1.7%	1.1%

Table 4: Study programmes of participants

In terms of L2 speaker's fluency in English, Q7 provided a self-assessment scale for the respondents to fill out, in which 1 meant "complete beginner" and 10 meant "native-like with absolute certainty". Notably, all L2 speakers of English rated their fluency as very high, with the lowest score being 4, as is shown in Table 5. The arithmetic mean for L2 speakers is 8.04 (SD=1.16), and the median is 8. L1 speakers of English were not asked to assess their own fluency as this is typically a feature of the description of L2 proficiency and production.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	0%	0.6%	1.7%	7.9%	16.3%	40.4%	23.0%	10.1%

Table 5: Self-reported fluency of L2 speakers' English

We must also mention second languages. For English L1 speakers, French was the most common L2 reported (9; 20.9%), closely followed by Spanish (8; 18.6%). Only 3 native English speakers reported speaking Czech. Out of 43 English L1 speakers, 15 did not fill out any L2s, and would therefore be considered monolingual. For English L2 speakers, English was unsurprisingly the most commonly reported L2. However, only 132 speakers marked English as one of their L2s, even though the group had overwhelmingly rated their fluency in the language as high, and were in fact filling out a questionnaire focused on English, and in English. It was perhaps because of the overwhelmingly 'English' surroundings that the respondents hadn't taken into account that they had to report speaking English as well. All L2 participants therefore presumably have English as (one of) their L2s.

Lastly, the respondents' use of English in various domains needs to be taken into account. Both groups filled out a question regarding their use of English in various domains (Q8 for L2 speakers, Q29 for L1 speakers, respectively), adapted from Dewaele (2017). For the purposes of this thesis, the results highlight that our L2 speakers use English extensively,

in various parts of their lives (see Tables 6 and 7), most notably with friends, colleagues, and strangers.

L1 speakers: How often do you speak English when...	always	frequently	sometimes	rarely	never
ALONE	20.93%	25.58%	32.65%	13.95%	6.98%
WITH FRIENDS	11.63%	48.84%	27.91%	4.65%	6.98%
WITH FAMILY	4.65%	2.33%	41.86%	30.23%	20.93%
WITH COLLEAGUES	4.65%	4.65%	27.91%	30.23%	32.56%
WITH STRANGERS	2.33%	0.00%	13.95%	55.81%	27.91%

Table 6: Self-reported use of English among L1 speakers of English

L2 speakers: How often do you speak English when...	always	frequently	sometimes	rarely	never
ALONE	7.91%	54.80%	28.81%	6.21%	2.26%
WITH FRIENDS	1.69%	35.03%	37.85%	24.29%	1.13%
WITH FAMILY	0.56%	3.95%	16.95%	48.59%	29.94%
WITH COLLEAGUES	9.04%	36.16%	25.42%	19.21%	10.17%
WITH STRANGERS	4.49%	33.15%	51.69%	10.11%	0.56%

Table 7: Self-reported use of English among L2 speakers of English

5 Results and Analysis

The data collected in this thesis will now be analysed, and when applicable, compared to previous research. Due to the scope and length of an undergraduate thesis, not all data collected will be analysed, and the available analysis will only be descriptive. Many comparisons could be made with the available data, especially in terms of gender or age. We will focus on the L1 and L2 distinctions: first, we will put forward the respondents' self-assessment of their swearing in English, secondly, we will examine its reality in word rating tasks, and finally we will elaborate on the respondents' attitudes towards teaching swearing to foreign language learners. The research questions (RQs) will then be consulted in a separate subchapter.

5.1 Self-reported Swearing

In answer to Q13 or Q34, respectively, both groups of participants had similar responses to their contact with swearing in English (Figure 1). Notably, all respondents reported they come in contact with it, although L2 speakers of English report doing so less. Nevertheless, not one participant in either group reported never coming in contact with the phenomenon.



Figure 1: Responses to Q13+34, from L1 and L2 English speakers; 1=never, 5=all the time

Furthermore, Q11 and Q32, respectively, asked the participants about how often they swore depending on their interlocutors (see Tables 8 and 9). Overall, L2 speakers of English reported swearing in English less than L1 speakers. The most noticeable difference can be spotted when with family and friends, but even when alone, with colleagues or with strangers, L2 speakers generally reported less swearing in English than L1 speakers. These findings are consistent with the previous study Delawae (2017). The reasons for this divide have been discussed previously, so here we will only mention that an L2 speaker of English may in fact not communicate in English with their family at all, or only very rarely – and the same could be said about their friends, and other aspects of their lives.

L1 speakers: How often do you swear in English when...	always	frequently	sometimes	rarely	never
ALONE	6.18%	32.58%	28.65%	20.22%	12.36%
WITH FRIENDS	9.55%	25.84%	35.39%	24.16%	5.06%
WITH FAMILY	1.12%	1.12%	14.61%	30.90%	52.25%
WITH COLLEAGUES	1.69%	3.37%	20.22%	30.90%	43.82%
WITH STRANGERS	0.56%	2.81%	12.36%	29.78%	54.49%

Table 8: L1 speakers' assessment of their frequency of swearing in English

L2 speakers: How often do you swear in English when...	always	frequently	sometimes	rarely	never
ALONE	18.60%	18.60%	39.53%	16.28%	6.98%
WITH FRIENDS	9.30%	46.51%	27.91%	9.30%	6.98%
WITH FAMILY	0.00%	2.33%	32.56%	37.21%	27.91%
WITH COLLEAGUES	0.00%	2.33%	27.91%	34.88%	34.88%
WITH STRANGERS	0.00%	0.00%	20.93%	46.51%	32.56%

Table 9: L2 speakers' assessment of their frequency of swearing in English

Another key topic connected to swearing in English is accuracy. When self-assessing their accuracy in swearing in English, both groups of respondents were fairly confident. L2 speakers of English were relatively confident, although not as confident as L1 speakers (Figure 2). In fact, 81.63% of L2 speakers reported 3 or higher on their accuracy (1=never; 5=always).

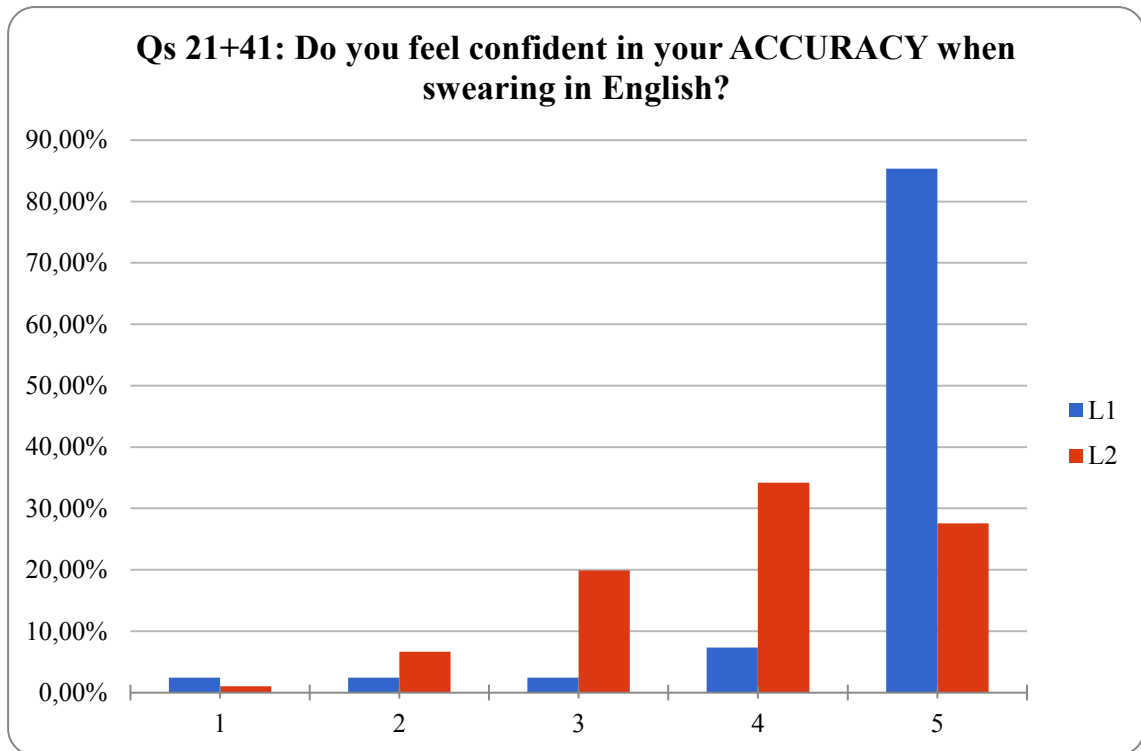


Figure 2: Self-perceived accuracy when swearing in English, for L1 and L2 speakers of English;
1 = never, 5 = always

Now that we have established that both L1 and L2 speakers come in contact with swearing in English and do in fact swear, we can assess their perception of it. This is particularly salient when we take perceived accuracy into account, since L2 speakers of English were found to be fairly confident in their ability in this area. We will now look into their perception of taboo severity, and compare it to the results of previous studies.

5.2 Offensiveness Ratings

Questions 9 and 30, respectively, asked the participants to rate the offensiveness of twelve taboo words. On the provided scale, 1 equalled ‘not [offensive]’ and 10 ‘very [offensive].’ These twelve words were taken directly from Beers Fägersten (2007), who herself had adapted them from a more extensive list provided in Jay (1977).¹⁶ These words were: ‘ass,’ ‘asshole,’ ‘bastard,’ ‘bitch,’ ‘damn,’ ‘cunt,’ ‘dick,’ ‘fuck,’ ‘hell,’ ‘motherfucker,’ ‘nigger,’ and ‘shit.’ As has been stated previously, both L1 and L2 speakers of English were given the very same questions, and both groups provided their respective results (Tables 10 and 11, and for comparison Table 12).

¹⁶ For an overview of these two studies, please see sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

L1	ass	asshole	bastard	bitch	damn	cunt
Average	3.19	4.42	4	5.58	2.09	7.86
Median	3	4	4	6	1	8
standard deviation	2.06	2.13	2.30	2.35	1.68	2.49
L1	dick	fuck	hell	mother-fucker	nigger	shit
average	3.14	5.23	1.79	6.00	8.95	3.51
median	3	6	1	6	10	3
standard deviation	1.77	2.64	1.13	2.69	2.35	2.32

Table 10: Word offensiveness rating: L1 English speakers; on a 1–10 scale, 1 = not offensive, 10 = very offensive

L2	ass	asshole	bastard	bitch	damn	cunt
average	3.73	5.62	5.16	6.41	7.87	2.22
median	3	5	5	7	8	2
standard deviation	1.97	2.16	2.28	2.17	2.25	1.74
L2	dick	fuck	hell	mother-fucker	nigger	shit
average	5.43	5.71	2.14	7.08	7.70	4.15
median	5	6	1	8	9	4
standard deviation	2.44	2.47	1.83	2.43	2.91	2.28

Table 11: Word offensiveness rating: L2 English speakers, on a scale of 1–10, 1 = not offensive, 10 = very offensive

Once we have examined the results for both groups, we can see that out of twelve words, four showed a difference in rating which was greater than 1.25 (‘damn,’ ‘cunt,’ ‘dick,’ and ‘nigger’), and seven total have a difference of more than 1 (the four mentioned previously, plus ‘asshole,’ ‘bastard,’ and ‘motherfucker’). This represents a great divide in the usage and perception of everyday taboo words. L2 speakers therefore ‘misuse’ or at the very least ‘misjudge’ the severity of the taboo of seven out of the twelve words given. Notably, this misunderstanding goes in both directions: ‘bastard,’ ‘dick,’ ‘motherfucker,’ and most notably ‘damn’ were perceived as more offensive than L1 speakers said, while ‘cunt’ and ‘nigger’ are seen as less offensive by L2 speakers of English.

	ass	asshole	bastard	bitch	damn	cunt	dick	fuck	hell	mother-fucker	nigger	shit
L1	3.19	4.42	4	5.58	2.09	7.86	3.14	5.23	1.79	6.00	8.95	3.51
L2	3.73	5.62	5.16	6.41	7.87	2.22	5.43	5.71	2.14	7.08	7.70	4.15
diff.	-0.54	-1.2	-1.16	-0.83	-5.78	5.64	-2.29	-0.48	-0.35	-1.08	1.25	-0.64

Table 12: Word offensiveness rating, L1 and L2 speakers, mean average and difference

Beers Fägersten’s (2007) ratings which are provided here (Table 13) were the combined total of both their L1 and L2 speakers of English, as the author does not provide separate L1 and L2 ratings.¹⁷ That being said, the results are comparable to our findings of L1 ratings in all but one word (this word is ‘cunt,’ which will be discussed in a later section.) Our L2 ratings can then be interpreted the same way as when in connection to our L1 ratings. The comparison to Beers Fägersten (*ibid.*) has proven that our ratings are in fact valid, as they can and have been reproduced by separate researchers.

	ass	asshole	bastard	bitch	damn	cunt
average	3.2	4.4	4.3	5.0	2.3	6.6
standard deviation	2.5	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.1	3.0
	dick	fuck	hell	mother-fucker	nigger	shit
average	4.1	5.0	2.3	5.9	8.5	3.1
standard deviation	2.7	3.1	2.3	3.2	2.3	2.5

Table 13: Word offensiveness ratings from Beers Fägersten (2007: 19–20), L1 and L2 speakers combined

The comparison between Jay (1977) and this thesis is less straight forward. Firstly, the word offensiveness rating in this study uses a rating of 1–9, as opposed to 1–10. Secondly, the study was conducted over 40 years ago, and due to the changing landscape of language taboo and the recent rise of political correctness, it may not be as comparable as would be desired. Therefore, we will only use it sparingly: of the twelve words used in our word list, eleven also appear in Jay (*ibid.*);¹⁸ of the eleven used, the five with the highest ratings were: ‘motherfucker’ (8.56/9), ‘fuck’ (7.98/9), ‘cunt’ (7.04/9), ‘bastard’ (6.19/9), ‘nigger’ (5.73/9).¹⁹ We must immediately notice that the word perceived as most offensive on Jay’s list is ‘motherfucker,’ as opposed to our ‘nigger’ for our L1 speakers and ‘damn’ for L2 speakers. These words do appear on Jay’s list, but are given a much lower rating – ‘damn’ rated as low as 3.73/9, the second least offensive on Jay’s list. On the other hand, ‘nigger’ received a much higher rating in recent years, as it had for Beers Fägersten, in whose research it also appeared as the most offensive word on the list. From this we may surmise that religious taboo has been declining, while the use of racial slurs has become more reproachable in recent years.

¹⁷ This is due to her object of study, for further details see 3.2.2.

¹⁸ The one missing word being ‘dick,’ which presumably did not have the taboo status or frequency of usage to be included in the rating task.

¹⁹ For a full review of Jay’s 1974 ratings, see Jay (1992): 143.

5.3 Comments on Individual Word Ratings

We have assessed the overall ratings of the twelve taboo words, and compared them to those of previous studies. What follows is brief commentary on each word on the list, with reference to its individual ratings, as well as possible interpretations for the L1/L2 divide, when applicable.

While L2 speakers of English assessed the offensiveness of ‘ass’ ‘correctly,’ they overestimated the offensiveness of ‘asshole.’ Both signify the same body part, but both can also be used to refer to a person who is being unpleasant. Notably, ‘asshole’ has consistently received a higher rating than ‘ass’ in all available research, perhaps because of it being more graphic.

Originally, ‘bastard’ was a pejorative term which referred to someone born out of wedlock. We can see here that the religious dogma surrounding this topic is what assigned the negative connotative value to the word. This dogma has, in recent years, been subsiding. Therefore, the literal usage of ‘bastard’ is slowly evaporating, and this word tends to be used as a general pejorative term. In this instance, L2 speakers of English perceived it as more offensive than L1 speakers, possibly due to the word’s religion-conscious connotation, their own cultural differences, or the word’s counterpart in their respective L1s.

Another word with a religious connotation is ‘damn.’ Here again we can see that this word has consistently received a low rating on the offensiveness scale in our L1 respondents, as well as in Beers Fägersten (2007). L2 speakers have notably gotten the rating very ‘wrong’: the difference between the two ratings is a staggering 5.78, the biggest divergence in the rating task. ‘Hell’ also tells a similar tale of past religious dogma, but neither group found it particularly offensive, with L2 and L1 values only 0.35 apart. In this case, the word’s offensiveness seems to be disappearing overall.

Both terms ‘bitch’ and ‘cunt’ serve as derogatory terms specifically for describing women. As such, a case could be made for them being ‘slurs’ rather than ‘swear words,’ especially the latter which is commonly referred to as ‘the C-word.’ Nevertheless, they belong in the category of taboo language, and their level of offensiveness can be measured. For ‘bitch,’ the ratings for L1 and L2 speakers did not differ dramatically. This is perhaps because the word is used more frequently particularly in film and television, and because it has also been reclaimed by some groups of women. Its severity is also not as strong as with the other word. ‘Cunt’ yielded surprising results: L2 speakers in fact greatly underestimated its

connotative strength, with a difference bigger than 5.5.²⁰ Many interpretations of this could be mentioned, but relevant to us may be the word's usage in British English vs American English vs International English, or whether the L2 speakers of English are familiar with the word at all.

'Fuck' is by far the most common and well-known swear word in English. It or its omitted version f*ck or something similar is featured in some form or other in traditional media, as well as on the internet, in books and movies, and in song lyrics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, L2 speakers assessed its level of offensiveness 'correctly' – the question going forward is whether they are aware of the subtle nuances that are associated with this word and its various instances of usage. 'Motherfucker' is one of the many uses of 'the F-word.' Its content is again more graphic, and this is possibly why it has received a higher rating than the simple 'fuck' in all available research. L2 speakers did mark it as significantly more offensive than L1 speakers though, even though they had correctly assessed the abstract 'fuck.' This perhaps shows that when used in a wider context (even if this context is simply in connection to another word), their learned perception of the taboo word comes into question.

The word rated as most offensive by L1 speakers and in Beer Fägersten (2007) was 'nigger,' commonly referred to as 'the n-word.' This is by far the most problematic, and the only one people have raised arguments against being on the list. 'Nigger' is inarguably a racial slur, used with the distinct intention to hurt someone. This is why the lack of awareness exhibited in L2 speakers of English is deeply troubling, as they were off by 1.25. For 'the n-word,' context is key more than anywhere else, and this may be one of the reasons why L2 speakers are confused about its usage. Just as with 'bitch,' the Black community has actually reclaimed the word to a certain extent – this is why it may appear in song lyrics, but only within a very specific context of a Black person saying it in a non-derogatory manner. The common consensus is that in this case, the word is not offensive. In any other case, 'the n-word' is considered a very offensive slur, and issues around hate speech do arise.

In comparison to the previous word, 'shit' serves as the uncomplicated, everyday taboo word. In fact, most cultures have taboos around bodily functions and their results. We should therefore not be surprised that L2 speakers assessed it successfully. 'Dick' would be another case of bodily parts (especially those which could be associated with sexual acts) having taboo names. In this case, however, L2 speakers rated it as significantly higher than L1

²⁰ On a scale of 1–10, this is more than half the scale itself.

speakers. This is most striking when compared to the ‘female’ taboo words, such as ‘bitch’ and ‘cunt,’ which were rated slightly higher and much lower, respectively.

From close analysis of each word on the list and its rating, as well as the comparison to previous research, it has become glaringly obvious there is a deficiency in the perception of taboo language in L2 speakers of English, as the L2 speakers got 7 out of 12 taboo words ‘wrong.’ Their perceived accuracy, and frequent contact with swearing in English, more than proved the point that this issue has been largely unrealized up until now. We will discuss the implications of this in the following chapter. While on the subject of L1/L2 speaker perception, it is paramount to mention that while L1 speakers of English do not own the language per se, they do provide a useful and powerful metric by which we have compared people’s fluency. This tactic is used around the world, and has in fact been used in this thesis. We will briefly cover the respondents’ attitudes towards swearing and foreign language teaching in anticipation of its coverage in the following chapter.

5.4 Responses Regarding the Inclusion of Swearing in FLT

The two remaining issues left to address are the respondents’ own views on whether swearing is a part of mastering a foreign language, and if they think it should be taught to L2 learners. In answer to Q22 or Q42, respectively, both groups gave their answers (Figure 3). The scale provided was 1 = ‘absolutely not’ and 5 = ‘absolutely yes’ to the question “Is mastering swearing a part of mastering a foreign language?” For this section, 83.7% L1 speakers of English and 87.3% of L2 speakers chose 3 or higher, and were therefore either neutral about, or in favour of this statement. The most significant discrepancy in this section was around the reversed values of the fourth and fifth column; this shows that significantly more L1 English speakers believe this statement fully, whereas L2 speakers are not as forthcoming. Nevertheless, the number of people who believe mastering swearing is not a part of mastering a foreign language is in the minority.

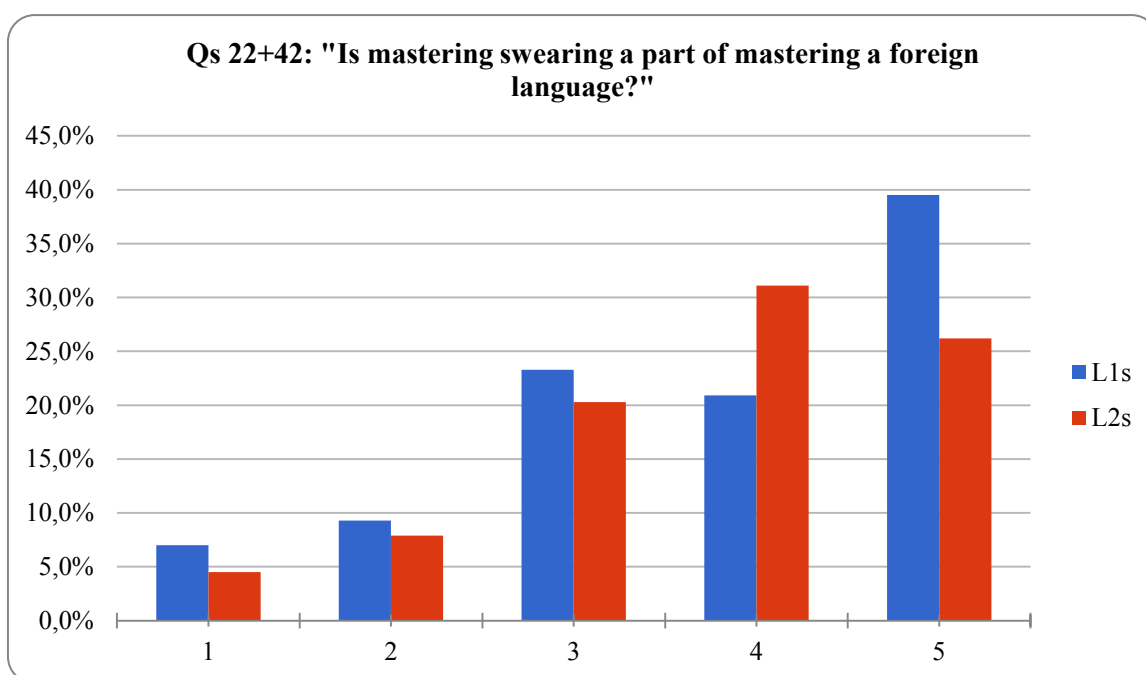


Figure 3: Responses to Qs 22+42, from L1 and L2 speakers; 1=absolutely no, 5=absolutely yes

In terms of the respondents' opinion on inclusion of swearing into the curriculum for English learners, one third of each group opted for the 'I don't know' option, while over half of L1 speakers and over 40% of L2 speakers chose 'yes' (Table 14). Notably, more L2 speakers were in favour of not including it, compared to L1 speakers of English. Their false confidence in their accuracy may have played a role in this decision.

Qs 24+44: "Do you think swearing should be taught to English language learners?"			
	yes	no	I don't know
L1	52.4%	16.7%	31.0%
L2	40.4%	29.2%	30.3%

Table 14: Responses to Qs24+44, from L1 and L2 speakers

5.5 Research Questions Examined

This thesis set out to answer four research questions (RQs) which can be found in section 3.4. In the following section, we will examine these four questions, with special reference to whether or not the present research project addressed or answered them.

The answer to RQ1 appears at beginning of Chapter 5: yes, L2 speakers of English were found to have different answers to their level of swearing in English, as shown in Tables 8 and 9. Similarly, RQ2 was also answered, with the ratings of taboo words provided in Table 10, 11 and 12: L2 speakers provided contrasting readings of seven out of twelve

words, therefore getting them ‘wrong’ and not understanding their full weight. RQ3 was also successfully answered, as Chapter 5 provides a comparison to Beers Fägersten (2007) and Jay (1977) when applicable, with commentary.

RQ4 was answered at the end of Chapter 5 of this thesis. We have briefly commented on the respondents’ opinions on whether swearing is a part of mastering a language, and their views on the inclusion of swearing in English classrooms. While the ratings of the two groups were not the same, they did not differ dramatically, and there was a significant amount of support for the inclusion of swearing in ESL classes.

6 Conclusion

The results of this thesis present troubling measurements for the swearing of L2 speakers. As we have seen in the previous chapter, we have found a significant departure between the offensiveness perception of swearing in English in L1 and L2 English speakers, where L2 speakers assessed 7 out of 12 taboo words alternatively to their L1 counterparts. The respondents have also self-reported their interactions with swearing in English: they come in contact with swearing in English, they use it in most aspects of their lives, and they were confident in their accuracy. From these results, we now realize there is a discrepancy between what L2 speakers think of their use of swearing in English and what that actual usage may be. Simply put, L2 users assess the level of offensiveness of the words differently, which may also mean they do not understand the full scope of the use of the words.

As put forward in the literature review (see section 3.3.1), the areas in which L2 speakers of English may have trouble are: frequency, context, and cultural differences (Mercury 1995; Finn 2017; Horan 2013). While our word-rating task did not take any of these into consideration, our data shows that our L2 speakers of English could nevertheless use guidance in these areas. The main take away from our task is that their perception of swearing in English differs from that of L1 speakers, and we can therefore surmise that their use of taboo language is going to as well.

This could have grave results for their lives. Because swearing fulfils a valuable function in society (e.g. stress relief, expression of anger or surprise, socialization, etc.), L2 speakers who do not understand this can be left outside the full communicational spectrum, if they are not given instruction. The point is for L2 speakers to understand the full and complex use of at least the most frequently used swear and taboo words – the context in which they may and may not be used, their cultural and historical significance, and their various meanings in instances of usage. To illustrate this, we will follow two imaginary L2 speakers on a journey through their respective days.

Our first speaker is a woman who may encounter the word ‘bitch’ in various instances: firstly, the word may be hurled at her in the form of a cat-call by a strange man as she is walking to work; secondly, while at work, a male colleague may use this word when talking about another woman from the office whom he finds frustrating or perhaps intimidating; and thirdly, when our speaker is enjoying after-work drinks with her female colleagues,

one of them may refer to that very same woman as a ‘bitch’ while also including herself and our speaker in that group.

Similarly, our second speaker is a man who could encounter the word ‘fuck’ throughout his day: firstly, he may hear the word used extensively on the TV series he watches during his commute in the morning; secondly, he may be in the shocked audience of a work presentation where the speaker makes use of the word frequently; thirdly, he may overhear this word from his desk neighbor, who is clicking frantically at his computer, quickly looks up and apologizes right afterwards; and lastly, while our male speaker is out at a pub with his friends looking for prospective partners, one of the members of the group may use ‘fuck’ to describe what they would like to do to a woman standing nearby.

These examples were used to illustrate some of the complexities of the two words presented. Importantly, both of these words received similar ratings from L1 and L2 speakers – they were used to illustrate that other words may present even more complex communicative situations. L2 speakers’ lack of knowledge about swearwords may lead to confusion and frustration, but also to them being the objects of ridicule (maybe without realizing it) or being reprimanded at work, or even possibly to be accused of hate speech. These ideas are supported in our literature review.

Once we have discovered this possible issue, we can also discuss its solution: this thesis argues in favour of the inclusion of swearing and taboo language in the curriculum for ESL learners. Some materials already exist, alongside the aforementioned research on the topic. However, they are insufficient in number, and more research needs to be done to fully assess the situation.

Obviously, teaching swearing should not be done with reckless abandon; as with any part of language teaching, or in fact education, deeper knowledge of the topic and the consultation of all available research should advise the education policy. There would indeed be little to no point to teaching beginners how to swear extensively, or in trying to explain minute differences to children. That being said, advanced English learners – therefore people who already have vast knowledge of and about the language – would benefit from being made aware of this issue. This could make the difference between them being able to integrate in a foreign country, or in them not participating in hate speech. It would bridge the possibility for miscommunication, as discussed above, not to mention provide a fuller understanding of the language in its entirety.

The case of the curriculum inclusion is also supported by the data collected in this thesis (see section 5.4). As we have seen in the responses to the questionnaire, the majority of both L1 and L2 speakers of English considered mastering swearing as a part of mastering a foreign language, which would support our claim that it is an essential and natural part of language. In terms of teaching swearing, although the results were less straight forward, they nevertheless showed that over 40% of L1 and L2 speakers thought that swearing should be taught to English learners. From these two preliminary questions, we can surmise that the general public may not be opposed to the inclusion of swearing in the curriculum, and the students would in fact welcome it.

There are several limitations of this study. Firstly, as with most research on taboo language, the sample is limited only to university students. This was in fact our target group, and the group's homogeneity helped create robust results, but it is clear that the data cannot be applied to the entire population. It should be noted that our results were backed up by and compared with previous research, which does add another level of validity; however, this only makes the results valid within the much-studied field of university student language. This is in fact a prominent problem with all language taboo research, due to researchers' access to test subjects and speech communities.

The sample of respondents presents several challenges. Some are specific to the L2 speakers of English: the question whether their self-reported fluency actually matches their real-life fluency, for example, or their knowledge of the taboo words provided in rating task. Much can be said about the latter, with specific reference to the L2 usage of the words, and this could be one of the reasons for the inaccurate L2 ratings. In real life, however, the L2 speakers in question may be faced with any taboo words regardless of their knowledge of them, and their ability to react appropriately would dictate their ability to react the way social and language conventions dictate.

Another equally valid point regarding the taboo word ratings is context. Context is known to play a crucial role in language taboo, as discussed in previous sections. As Beers Fägersten (2007) pointed out, we can question the very validity of word rating tasks – since certain words are very offensive when said by a member of one group, but not offensive at all if used by a member of another (see 'nigger' or 'bitch' in Chapter Five). Language, and therefore words, does not exist in a vacuum of a lab or an online questionnaire – and the strength of one's attitudes about word offensiveness may differ based on the situation

they find the word in. This is not reflected in this research, as is the case with most language taboo research.

Since this thesis deals with language attitudes, it do not spend a lot of time on the actual behaviour of our respondents. The questionnaire included one section about the reported behaviour of our respondents, with reference to their usage of English and swearing in their everyday lives. This kind of reported behaviour served as a way for us to prove they come in contact and use both English and swearing in English. That being said, we need to highlight that there is a proven disconnect between reported usage and actual usage of any phenomenon. Therefore, if we wanted to research anything beyond language attitudes, or even their connection to behaviour, it would be beneficial to compare our results to respondents' actual usage of taboo words and swearing. For this, we must turn to further research.

This topic and thesis offer many opportunities for further research. First and foremost, the data solicited by the questionnaire can be put under more detailed statistical analysis – and this can be done to all the data, not just the parts examined in this thesis. We could also focus on other groups aside from the L1/L2 distinction, such as differences between the genders or age groups – and this would yield a more complex analysis of swearing. Furthermore, there are several areas of the questionnaire which were not examined in this thesis, such as the qualitative responses to open-ended questions.

The author believes it would be beneficial to repeat the experiments, specifically with more L1 speakers of English, and with more L2 speakers whose L1 is other than Czech or Slovak. It would also be interesting to compare our results to the actual usage of L2 swearing, as opposed to their reported behaviour and attitudes. And finally, the topic of the inclusion of swearing in the curriculum of ESL advanced learners also calls for more research, not only into the benefits of this, but also into the practical parts of the actual teaching process – the teaching materials, methodology, and student and teacher feedback. The author would like to take all these options under consideration when looking for new research topics further down the line. After all, we have shown that there may be merit in teaching others to swear in English.

7 References

- Beers Fägersten, K. (2007) 'A sociolinguistic analysis of swear word offensiveness'. *Saarland Working Papers in Linguistics* 1, 14–37, DIVA <<http://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:449175/FULLTEXT02.pdf>> Accessed 12 October 2018.
- Cohen, A. D. (2016) 'The teaching of pragmatics by native and nonnative language teachers: What they know and what they report doing'. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 6, 561–585, ERIC <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1134485.pdf>> Accessed 1 March 2019.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2004) 'The Emotional Force of Swearwords and Taboo Words in the Speech of Multilinguals'. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25, 204–222, Taylor & Francis Online <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01434630408666529?needAccess=true>> Accessed 15 February 2019.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2017) 'Self-reported frequency of swearing in English: do situational, psychological and sociobiographical variables have similar effects on first and foreign language users?' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural* 38, 330–345, Taylor & Francis Online: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01434632.2016.1201092?needAccess=true>> Accessed 16 February 2019.
- Eiser, J.R. (2011) *Social Psychology: Attitudes, Cognition and Social Behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finn, E. (2017) 'Swearing: The good, the bad & the ugly'. *ORTESOL Journal* 34, 17–26, ERIC <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1152392.pdf>> Accessed 12 October 2018.
- Garret, P. (2011) *Attitudes to Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gawinkowska, M., M.B. Paradowski and M. Bilewicz (2013) 'Second Language as an Exemptor from Sociocultural Norms. Emotion-Related Language Choice Revisited'. *Plos One* 8, 1–6, PLOS ONE <<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0081225&type=printable>> Accessed 1 June 2019.
- Gohner, G. and M. Wanke (2002) *Attitudes and Attitude Change*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Horan, G. (2013) "'You taught me language: and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse": cursing and swearing in foreign language learning'. *Language and Intercultural Communication* 13, 283–297, Taylor & Francis Online <

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14708477.2013.804533?needAccess=true>>
Accessed 15 February 2019.

Chromý, J. (2014) *Základy Sociolingvistiky Učební material pro studeny oboru Český jazyk a literatura*. Praha: Karolinum.

Jay, T. (1992) *Cursing in America*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Liyanage, I., T. Walker, B. Bartlett, and X. Guo (2015) 'Accommodating taboo language in English language teaching: issues of appropriacy and authenticity'. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 28, 113–125, Taylor & Francis Online <
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07908318.2015.1031675?needAccess=true>>
Accessed 1 March 2019.

Maio, G.R. and G. Haddock (2012) *The Psychology of Attitudes and Attitude Change*. London: SAGE.

Mercury, R.-E. (1995) 'Swearing: A "Bad" Part of Language; A Good Part of Language Learning'. *TESL Canada Journal* 13, 28–36, ERIC <
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ518119.pdf>> Accessed 29 May 2019.

Mohr, M. (2013) *Holy Sh*t: A Brief History of Swearing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richards, J. R. and R. Schmidt (2010) *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.

Trudgill, P. (2000) *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. London: Penguin.

Vingerhoets, J.J.M., L.M. Bylsma and C. de Vlam (2013) 'Swearing: A Biopsychological Perspective'. *Psychological Topics* 22, 287–305, EBSCO <
<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=20&sid=9aeb7846-ad03-41d6-a6e1-dc47aaf013b1%40sessionmgr103>> Accessed 30 June 2019.

'swear, v.' (2019) *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available on-line: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/195608?isAdvanced=false&result=2&rskey=OW9Wz8&>. Accessed 2 August 2019.

'curse, n.' (2019) *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available on-line: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/46132?rskey=gG5Liy&result=1&isAdvanced=false>. Accessed 2 August 2019.

8 Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá klením v angličtině, konkrétně jsme se snažili zjistit, zda se jazykové přístupy liší u rodilých a nerodilých mluvčích angličtiny. Cílem práce bylo vyzkoumat tyto rozdíly, pomocí našeho výzkumu a následným porovnáním výsledků s již existujícím výzkumem.

První kapitola je úvod, ve kterém je představena struktura práce a práce samotná. Teoretická část se skládá ze dvou kapitol. V druhé kapitole jsou nejprve definovány důležité termíny, které jsou stěžejní pro obsah práce: např. jazykové postoje, jazykové tabu, první (rodilý) a druhý (popřípadě další) jazyk. Teoretická část rovněž pozoruje důvody, proč se v angličtině použilo slovo *swearing* místo *cursing*, či jiné názvy pro tento fenomén. Ve druhé kapitole je také poskytnuta „laická“ definice klení, která se potom objeví v dotazníku.

Třetí kapitola je také rozdělena na několik částí. V první části (3.1) jsou rozebírány jazykové postoje: jedná se o termín, který se používá jak v sociolingvistice, tak v psychologii a sociologii. Tato část kapitoly poskytuje o postojích základní informace – jak se popisují, jak se dělí, atd. Tato sekce poté popisuje způsob zkoumání – v laboratoři nebo pomocí internetových dotazníků, přímo či nepřímo, a také představuje koncept Likertovy škály.

Druhá část této kapitoly (3.2) popisuje výzkum, který je použit v praktické části této práce. Jedná se o tři projekty: Dewaele (2017), Beers Fägersten (2007), a Jay (1977). Dewaele zkoumal jazykové postoje ke klení pomocí anonymního internetového dotazníku. Beers Fägersten nechali své respondenty hodnotit neslušnost (offensiveness) dvanácti slov, a poté s nimi vedli kvalitativní pohovory. Jay v sedmdesátých letech poskytnul slova na seznamu, který použili v Beers Fägersten. V páté kapitole jsou poté výsledky těchto studií porovnány s našimi výsledky.

Kapitola se dále zabývá (3.3) klením u nerodilých mluvčích. Na základě literatury - Dewaele (2004), Gawinkowska et al. (2013), Finn (2017), Mercury (1995) – jsme došli k několika závěrům: nerodilí mluvčí obecně vnímají klení v angličtině méně emotivně a dělají v něm chyby, a to na základě chybných či chybějících informací. Klení se ovšem ve třídách učí jen zřídka a to navzdory těmto hmatatelným rozdílům mezi rodilými a nerodilými mluvčími. Na konci kapitoly jsou potom shrnuty dvě studie, které zkoumaly, jak se s tabu zachází ve třídách: Cohen (2016) a Liyanage et al. (2015).

V poslední části (3.4) se vyskytují čtyři výzkumné otázky (VO), které si práce klade, a které dále zkoumá pomocí dotazníku. Tyto otázky jsou:

- (1) Liší se samo-ohlašované používání klení mezi rodilými a nerodilými mluvčími angličtiny?
- (2) Liší se výsledky měření tabu mezi rodilými a nerodilými mluvčími angličtiny?
- (3) Dají se naše výsledky porovnat s předchozím výzkumem?
- (4) Liší se rodilí a nerodilí mluvčí angličtiny ve svých postojích k návrhu učit klení v rámci výuky angličtiny?

Čtvrtá kapitola popisuje metodologii praktické části. Na základě literatury a předešlého výzkumu byl vytvořen anonymní internetový dotazník, který byl distribuován pomocí sociálních sítí. Text obsahoval odkaz na Google formulář a hlásil, že hledáme studenty vysokých škol. Dotazník byl anonymní, a obsahoval i otázky replikované z předešlého výzkumu (tj. Dewaele (2017) a Beers Fägersten (2007)). Přestože dotazník rozdělil respondenty do dvou skupin – rodilí a nerodilí mluvčí – všichni respondenti odpovídali na stejné otázky, přičemž několik z nich bylo minimálně upraveno, jelikož jsme brali v potaz jejich vztah k angličtině. Dotazník byl rozdělen do čtyř tematických kategorií: v první části jsme získali metadata o respondentech, ve druhé jsme replikovali předešlý výzkum, ve třetí jsme se ptali na obecné jazykové postoje ke klení v angličtině, a čtvrtá část se zabývala názory a postoji respondentů k možnosti zahrnout klení do rozvrhu hodin angličtiny. Všichni respondenti neodpověděli na všechny otázky, a některé z otázek byly dobrovolné (viz. Appendix).

Dotazník byl distribuován v rozmezí pěti týdnů v březnu a dubnu 2019, a to primárně studentům na dvou pražských univerzitách (názvy univerzit zůstávají v anonymitě); jedna je americká soukromá univerzita, druhá česká státní univerzita. Čtvrtá kapitola dále popisuje získaná data respondentů. Dotazník vyplnilo celkem 243 respondentů, 221 z nich odpovědělo kladně na otázku č. 1 „Studuješ univerzitu v Praze?“ Dotazník vyplnilo 43 rodilých mluvčích angličtiny a 178 nerodilých mluvčích, většina patřila do věkové kategorie 19-24 let, 68,3% respondentů zařadilo svůj gender jako žena, a 76,9% respondentů studuje bakalářský program. Dále je v kapitole ještě zmíněna plynulost nerodilých mluvčích a také domény používání angličtiny pro obě skupiny.

V páté kapitole jsou podrobně rozebrány výsledky dotazníku. V první sekci páté kapitoly (5.1) jsou shrnuty a analyzovány výsledky otázek, které se týkaly chování

respondentů – např. jak často klejí v angličtině, jak často používají angličtinu, a jak moc si věří, že správně používají sprostá slova v angličtině. Ve druhé sekci (5.2) se potom zaměřujeme na popis a analýzu individuálních tabu slov: v dotazníku se nacházelo 12 tabu slov, u kterých respondenti hodnotili jejich tabu. Jednalo se o dvanáct slov adaptovaných z Beers Fägersten (2007): *ass*, *asshole*, *bastard*, *bitch*, *damn*, *cunt*, *dick*, *fuck*, *hell*, *motherfucker*, *nigger*, and *shit*. Na základě hodnocení klení pomocí Likertovy škály jsme zjistili, že nerodilí mluvčí vnímají 7 z 12 slov podstatně jinak, než rodilí mluvčí (rozdíl více než 1). Naše výsledky jsme potom porovnali s předchozím výzkumem. V sekci 5.3 jsou poté blíže popsány hodnoty pro každé slovo. Oddíl 5.4 prezentuje výsledky ohledně názorů respondentů na výuku klení v rámci výuky angličtiny.

V poslední části (5.5) se tato bakalářská práce zaměřuje na to, zda byly výzkumné otázky zodpovězeny. Dochází se k závěru, že všechny otázky skutečně byly zodpovězeny v předešlých částech této práce, VO1 v sekci 5.1, VO2 v sekci 5.2, VO3 v sekcích 5.1 a 5.2, a VO4 v sekci 5.4.

Šestá kapitola se zabývá diskuzí a možnostmi dalšího výzkumu. Výsledky dokázaly významný rozdíl mezi tím, co si nerodilí mluvčí myslí o své plynulosti a znalosti klení v angličtině, a tím, jak skutečně tento fenomén vnímají. Na základě hodnocení klení pomocí Likertovy škály jsme zjistili, že nerodilí mluvčí vnímají 7 z 12 slov podstatně jinak, než rodilí mluvčí (rozdíl více než 1) – a právě toto představuje problém, jelikož respondenti hlásili, že si věří, a že angličtinu i klení v angličtině používají denně. Na základě tohoto zjištění práce poté rozebírá, co výsledky znamenají pro praxi.

V praxi se mohou nerodilí mluvčí ocitnout v nepříjemných situacích, protože zcela nerozumí celému spektru používání sprostých slov v angličtině. Hlavní domény, které jsou pro nerodilé mluvčí kritické, jsou při úspěšném klení v angličtině frekvence, kontext, a kulturní rozdíly (Mercury 1995; Finn 2017; Horan 2013). Správné pochopení těchto principů týkajících se klení v angličtině je pro nerodilé mluvčí nesmírně důležité. Pokud tyto principy neovládnu, nemohou se plně účastnit konverzace či se asimilovat mezi rodilé mluvčí v cizí zemi. Práce toto ilustruje na dvou teoretických příkladech: na ženě, která by mohla několikrát za den přijít do styku se slovem *bitch*; a na muži, který může přijít do styku se slovem *fuck*. Tato slova je možné slyšet v televizi, v práci, či v baru; a jejich interpretace je kritická pro úspěšnou komunikaci.

Na základě výsledků a jejich implikací se tato práce přiklání k zařazení klení do výuky nerodilých mluvčích angličtiny. Bylo by nutné však zvážit výběr daných slov určitým skupinám. Je potřeba zmínit, že za tohoto předpokladu by učitelé měli přístup k výzkumu a metodologii. Hlavní myšlenkou je učit celé spektrum jazyka, i neformální či tabu stránky, aby se studenti neocitli v nepříjemných či i nebezpečných situacích kvůli své nevědomosti. Učitelé i žáci také potřebují více výukových materiálů, metodologie a výzkumu ohledně tohoto tématu – a to včetně zpětné vazby od učitelů a žáků. Toto vše by mělo informovat oficiální vzdělávací politiku. Návrh zahrnout klení do výuky podporovala i velká část respondentů.

Dále práce zmiňuje svá omezení: zaměření pouze na studenty vysokých škol; jak a jak přesně nerodilí mluvčí měřili svou plynulost v angličtině a zda znali všechna tabu slova; fakt, že kontext všech tabu slov nebyl brán v potaz při hodnocení neslušnosti; a rozdíl mezi nahlášenými hodnotami a chováním respondentů, který jsme nebrali v potaz. Na konci šesté kapitoly potom zmiňujeme možnosti dalšího výzkumu – opakování této studie, více výukových materiálů, a porovnání jazykových postojů s chováním respondentů.